

**Transcript of verbal/written testimony before the
Michigan House Family and Children Services
Committee on December 6th 2006**

**Submitted by Cory Mackwood, Michigan voter, and
resident of the 86th District represented by Rep. Dave
Hildenbrand**

30 copies have been provided to the Committee

Ladies and Gentleman of the House, fellow Michigan voters, members of the media, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today on what is one of THE most important issues facing our state:

The health and well being of our future leaders: our children.

My name is Cory Mackwood. I am a fit and loving parent of Taylor William Shively-Mackwood, 12 years old on December 18th, and according to his own math and logic a teenager since that will mark the beginning of his 13th year. Taylor like many young people today has 2 parents that no longer live together. He is a child of divorce.

Taylor is bright, funny, loving and the subject of many Court Motions because the current custody system designed *when I was 9 years old*, I am proud to be nearing my 47th year, doesn't serve Taylor or the rest of our children as well as it should. The present system ASSURES that children will be the subject of constant litigation.

It is not Taylor's job to do anything about this. It is his job to be a child, and to have the opportunity to learn equally from BOTH of his parents. As adults it is our job to make sure he has the best opportunity to do both. An obstacle exists and we have the chance, no the OBLIGATION to remove it.

Imagine ANY system built in 1970, remaining primarily unchanged through 36 years of social change. That is our present Custody System.

I stand before you today as one of the 'lucky ones'. I am not here to complain or to blame. I am here to be part of the solution. I am here today to share with you my passion for parenthood.

I share joint legal custody of Taylor. I can not imagine any other way. I ignored legal advice and rather than settle for what is 'customary for a non-custodial parent', 4 overnights a month with our son, I spent 2 ½ years of my life and over \$150,000 so that I would remain *as active as a parent as I was before the divorce*. The financial resources I have are unavailable to the vast majority of non-custodial parents of Michigan. I firmly believe that without my resources I would be here today, as many are, only seeing my son 15% rather than almost ½ of the time.

Why you might ask was it necessary for me to do this? Because the current system designed when dad's left for work in the morning and mom's stayed home to provide love and care for children doesn't provide an assumption of 'equal parenting'. The current system doesn't apply 2006 lifestyle standards. **The current system doesn't reflect the overwhelming belief of 85% of Michigan residents who say, equal parenting after divorce should be the standard.**

HB 5267 would assure that FIT parents don't need to be 'well to do parents' to remain involved in their children's lives.

I hope for each of you honorable elected officials that you have the joy of being a parent. Taylor is the reason that I breathe. What if you awoke tomorrow and divorce happened. What would you expect from the system? What would the system provide for you? What would it provide for our future leaders: our children?

As I wrap up my testimony today I quote from a recent article on the matter of equal parenting:

A 2003 study published in "Family Relations" conducted by William Fabricius, Ph.D., of the Arizona State University Department of Psychology, found that young adults commonly said they had wanted more "paternal involvement" after divorce.

Fabricius concluded: "If the living arrangements for children after divorce are to reflect the desires of young adults who have lived through their parents' divorces, there is need for a change of norms as well as laws. Young college adults, men and women alike, believe that equal time spent living with each parent after divorce is best for children, and they believe this with remarkable uniformity. We need to begin listening to them."

It's time to listen to the adult children of divorce. It's way past time.

Children need both parents. Simply returning to this basic fundamental truth will greatly improve the situation for families and children.

Ladies and gentleman this article was written by a woman. Jane Spies, National Family Justice Association in June 2006.

Today I have purposely stayed away from calling myself a father. I am a parent ladies and gentleman. A parent before divorce, equal at that time in all decisions related to our son. A parent after divorce, not equal at this time in all decisions related to our son because the current Custody System fails us as citizens. Importantly it also fails our smallest citizens, our future leaders, our children.

This is NOT a gender issue. Those that argue this sound eerily similar to the bickering that children are forced to witness between parents. For the sake of our children, the parental bond must be preserved as the priority **especially in divorce**. Our children have already faced and endured 1 divorce; enough is enough!

Ladies and Gentlemen: It's not 1970 anymore. HB 5267 would create equality. Equality for our children and equality for parents who never intended and don't deserve to divorce their children.

HB 5267: It's about children; it's about fairness; it's about time.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a part of the solution.
God bless.

Greg B MacL
12/4/06